

# Hawaii Elementary School Sets Green Example

by Elaine Terry

Samuel K. Solomon Elementary School at Schofield Barracks in Wahiawa, Hawaii, is taking steps toward being more health conscious through the Greening of its custodial maintenance program. The school is phasing out traditional cleaners that contain harsh chemicals and adopting safer, Green products, which are better for the health and well-being of the school's 1,200 students and 200 employees.

The school has adopted Green cleaning products such as microfiber cleaning cloths and ionized water sprayers that do not require chemicals to clean. The microfiber cloths consist of dense fibers that absorb more and clean faster and more effectively than traditional cloths. The ionized water sprayer is a relatively new device that ionizes regular tap water; the ionized water is then sprayed onto surfaces, killing 99.9 percent of germs and bacteria. Some of these ionized water products have been found to also kill the H1N1 virus.

These Green cleaning products and practices were introduced to Solomon Elementary—along with other Central District Hawaii public schools—in April of last year by Rose Galera, CEH, executive director of the Professional Cleaning Institute of Hawaii. Afterward, Galera was contacted by Pauline Valoroso, Solomon's head custodian, for further training.

"On June 18 and 19, 2009, I held custodial training at Solomon Elementary, which was attended by all of the custodial staff, the cafeteria manager, the librarian, and Principal (Linda) Yoshikami," says Galera. "The ionized water sprayer, microfiber technology, and backpack vacuuming systems were introduced as Green cleaning

tools for a safe and healthy school environment."

Follow-up training for parents and teachers was later held with Galera's colleague Virgil Kodep. Subsequently, Principal Yoshikami made the decision to adopt Green cleaning by purchasing the tools and implementing the necessary processes and training to provide a clean, healthy, and safe environment.

Today at Solomon Elementary, the ionized water sprayer has replaced traditional, alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The ionized water is sprayed on the children's hands before they eat lunch; and since it's just water, it's safe if the children get it in their eyes or put it in their mouths, says Principal Linda Yoshikami (who recently retired as of March 31, 2010). The ionized water sprayer also is used to sanitize surfaces, such as cafeteria tables, desktops, and countertops. Principal Yoshikami notes that the investment in the ionized sprayer units also has saved the school money, due to the product's ability to be perpetually reused using only water and electricity.

"We envision that this ritual will be a best and daily practice—spraying desktops and having the students wipe off the excess," says Principal Yoshikami. "This will give us a clean surface for the next day."

Galera is continuing to educate teachers and school administrators about Green cleaning technologies. She recently spoke to Leeward and Central District educators during a daylong cleaning workshop held March 29, 2010.

Green cleaning for schools is part of the national Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC), launched in 2002. One



Parent Mikel Maddox (left) has her hands sanitized by the ionized water sprayer by Solomon Elementary School employee Brittany Layne (right) while her daughter, Faith Alvarado (middle), eats lunch.

of the campaign's partners is IEHA, of which Galera has been a member for 36 years and which has a strong presence in Hawaii. Other noteworthy industry partners include associations representing school administrators, teachers, principals, and parents, as well as the leading authority on Green, the U.S. Green Building Council.

Mark Bishop, HSC deputy director, says, "What we're seeing is a real movement as more school leaders recognize Green cleaning as a simple change that goes miles in protecting the health of everyone in the school building."

According to HSC, Hawaii is one of a handful of states that encourages Green cleaning in schools. According to Hawaii state law: "The Department of Education shall require that all public school facilities give first preference, where feasible, to the purchase and use of environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products that have been approved by the Green Seal program."

The Hawaii Legislature is currently reviewing a bill that would expand the statute to include products approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Design for the Environment and EcoLogo, which is administered by TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc. ♦

Elaine Terry is an IEHA member and former editor of *Hawaii Hospitality* magazine. She may be reached at [elaine@hawaii-ieha.org](mailto:elaine@hawaii-ieha.org). For more information on the Healthy Schools Campaign, please visit [www.healthyschools-campaign.org](http://www.healthyschools-campaign.org).